

THACKERAY'S LECTURES.—SWIFT.

[FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.]

A GOOD librarian, as well acquainted with the insides of books as the outsides, made the other day this shrewd observation—that in his experience every third work he took up was defective, either in the title or the first sentence. "What," he continued, "for example, is the meaning of the word 'humorist?' By what authority is it applied to a writer?—is it not misapplied to a wit? unless it be meant to degrade him. 'The wit,' says Addison in the *Spectator*, 'sinks imperceptibly into a humorist.' A humorist is one whose conduct, whose ways, are eccentric, 'his actions seldom directed by reason and the nature of things,' says Watts. It is best the word should be confined according to our dictionaries, to actions, not extended to authorship. The title of Mr. Thackeray's Lectures would lead a lover of plain English to expect narratives of eccentricities taken from real life, and perhaps from the acted buffooneries of itinerant boards, the dominion of Mr. Punch's dynasty—like other dynasties in this age of presumed matter of fact, becoming a 'dissolving view.'" Mr. Thackeray's English is generally so good, so perfectly to be understood, of such acceptable circulating coinage, that we are surprised at this mistake in the title of his book. Montaigne would head his chapters with any title—as we believe he ushered in one as "On Coach-horses"—and said nothing about them; and we readily admit that the privilege of "*Every Man in his Humor*" may be a fair excuse for the author of *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*.

We wish we could say that this little volume were unobjectionable in every other respect—but we cannot. We do not see in it a fair, honest, truth-searching and truth-declaring spirit; yet the style is so captivating, so *insinuating* in its deceiving plainness, so suggestive of every evil in its simplicity, so alluring onward, even when the passages we have read have left unpleasant impression, that it is impossible to lay down the book, though we fear to proceed. The reader may be like the poor bird under the known fascination: he never loses sight of the glittering eye—but it looks, even in its confident gayety, too much like that which charms, and delights in, a victim. We did not, it is true, expect from the author of "*Vanity Fair*" any flattering pictures of men and manners, nor of the world at large, of any age; but we were not prepared for his so strongly expressed dislike and condemnation of other people's misanthropy as these pages exhibit, particularly in his character of Swift.

And here we think we have a right to protest against Biographical Lectures. It is hardly possible for a lecturer to be fair to his subject. He has an audience to court and to please—to put in good-humor with themselves—to be flattered into a belief of their own goodness, by a bad portraiture of the eminent of the earth. He has to dig out the virtues

from the grave to show what vices cling to them—how they look when exhumed in their corruption. Praise is seldom piquant—commonplace is wearisome—startling novelties must put truth to a hazard. If the dead must be called up to judgment of an earthly tribunal, let it not be before a theatrical audience. The lecturer is under the necessity of being too much of an accuser; and if from his own nature, or from some misconception of the characters he takes up, he be a willing one, he has a power to condemn, that the mere writer has not.

In many passages of the book before us there are examples both of the lecturer's danger, and of his power: many things said because of his audience; and as such audience is generally largely feminine, what advantage has the over-moralizing and for the time over-moralized lecturer against the dumb and bodiless culprit called up from his mortal dust, should there be a suspicion of want of tenderness, or doubt of a fidelity and affection, some hundred and fifty years ago, and unpardonable forever? The lecture-table is no fit place, nor does it offer a fit occasion, to discuss the wondrous intricacies of any human character. It is not enough that the lecturer should have thought—there should be a pause, wherein a reader may think; but an audience cannot: nor is the lecturer, however deeply he may have thought, likely to have such disinterested self-possession and caution, in his oral descriptions and appeals for praise or blame, as are absolutely required for a truthful biographer. It is a bold thing to bid the illustrious dead come from the sanctity of their graves and stand before the judgment-seat of the author of *Vanity Fair*—to be questioned upon their religion and their morals, and not allowed, even if they could speak for themselves, to answer. The lecturer holds in his hand all their written documents, and all that have been written by scribes of old against them, and he will read, but what he pleases—he, the scrupulously moral, religious man, doubly sanctified at all points for his hour's lecture in that temporary professor's garb of proprieties, which he is under no necessity of wearing an hour after he has dismissed his audience. We are not for a moment insinuating any dereliction of all the human virtues and graces, as against Mr. Thackeray—but as a lecturer he must put on something of a sanctimonious or of a moral humbug; he is on his stage, he has to act his part, to "fret his hour." He must do it well—he will do it well; that is, to secure present rapturous applause. The audience is carried away quite out of its sober judgment by the wit, the wisdom, the pathos—and even the well-timed bathos—the pity, the satire, and the satire of all satire, in the pity. The ghosts are dismissed—sent back, as they should be, in the lecturer's and audience's estimation, to their "dead men's bones and all rottenness," no longer to taint the air of this amiable,

judicious, and all-perfect nineteenth century—epitomized in the audience.

Give Professor Owen part of an old bone or a tooth, and he will on the instant draw you the whole animal, and tell you its habits and propensities. What professor has ever yet been able to classify the wondrous varieties of human character? How very limited as yet the nomenclature! We know there are in our moral dictionary the religious, the irreligious, the virtuous, the vicious, the prudent, the profligate, the liberal, the avaricious, and so on to a few names; but the varieties comprehended under these terms—their mixtures, which, like colors, have no names—their strange complexities and intertwining of virtues and vices, graces and deformities, diversified and mingled, and making individualities—yet of all the myriads of mankind that ever were, not one the same, and scarcely alike: how little way has science gone to their discovery, and to mark their delineation! A few sounds, designated by a few letters, speak all thought, all literature, that ever was or will be. The variety is infinite, and ever creating a new infinite; and there is some such mystery in the endless variety of human character. There are the same leading features to all—these we recognize; but there are hidden individualities that escape research; there is a large *terra incognita*, hard to find, and harder to make a map of. And if any would try to be a discoverer, here is his difficulty—can he see beyond his own ken? How difficult to have a conception of a character the opposite of one's self! What man is so gifted? We are but portrait-painters, and no portrait-painter ever yet painted beyond himself—never represented on canvas an intellect greater than his own. In every likeness there is a something of the artist too. We look to other men, and think to find our own idiosyncracies, and we are prepared to love or hate accordingly. As the painter views his sitter in the glass, he is sure to see himself behind him. You biographers, you judges, self-appointed of other men, what a task do you set yourselves!—have you looked well into your own qualifications? You venture to plunge into the deep dark—to bring up the light of truth, which, if you could find it, would mayhap dazzle all your senses. It is far safer for your reputation to go out with Diogenes' lantern, or your own little one, and thrust it into men's faces, and make oath you cannot find an honest one; and then draw the glimmer of it close to your own foreheads, and tell people to look there for honesty. But this is our preface, not Mr. Thackeray's. He is too bold to need one. He rushes into his subject without excuse or apology, either for his own defects of delineation or of his subject's character. If you would desire to see with what consummate ability, and with what perfect reality in an unlikeness he can paint a monster, read the first life of his Lecture, that of the great man—and we would fain believe, in spite of any of his biographers, a good man—Dean Swift.

If we may be allowed to judge from a collection of contradictory statements respecting Swift, no man's life can be more difficult for a new writer to

undertake, or for any reader to comprehend. If we are to judge from the unhesitating tone of the many biographers, and their ready acceptance of data, no life is so easy. The essayist of the Times makes Swift himself answerable for all the contradictions; that they were all *in* him, and that he was at all times, from his birth to his death, mad. This is, indeed, to make short work of it and save the unraveling the perplexed skein of his history. Another writer contends that he was never mad at any period, not even the last of his life. That he was always mad is preposterous, unless we are to accept as insanity what is out of and beyond the common rate of men's thoughts and doings. We certainly lack in the character of Swift the one prevalent idea which pervades and occupies the whole mind of the madman. Such may have one vivid, not many opposites in him.

But the contradictions ascribed to Swift are more like the impossibilities of human nature—if they are to be received as absolute characteristics, and not as occasional exceptions, which are apt, in the best of mankind, to take the conceit out of the virtues themselves, and to put them into a temporary abeyance, and mark them with a small infirmity, that they grow not too proud.

The received histories, then, tell us that Swift was sincerely religious, and an infidel; that he was the tenderest of men, a brute, a fiend, a naked unclaimable savage; a misanthrope, and was the kindest of benefactors; that he was avaricious, and so judiciously liberal that he left no great fortune behind him. Such is the summary; the details are both delightful and odious. The man who owns these vices and virtues must indeed be a monster or a madman! These are characters very hard to fathom. Shakspeare has delineated one, and he has puzzled all the world except Shakspeare, who chose to make his picture more true by leaving it as a puzzle to the world. Hamlet has been pronounced mad from his conduct to Ophelia, mainly if not solely. It is a ready solution of the incomprehensible. Swift was a Hamlet to Stella and Vanessa; and as there are two against him, *versus* Hamlet's one love, critics pronounce him doubly mad. It is a very ingenious but not very satisfactory way of getting out of the difficulty. Mad or in his senses, he is a character that provokes; provoked writers are apt to be not fair ones; and because they cannot quite comprehend they malign: *damnant quod non intelligunt*, is also a rule guiding biographers. Shall he have the qualities "that might become an angel," or shall his portrait be "under the dark cloud and every feature be distorted into that of a fiend?" You have equal liberty from the records to depict him as you please. The picture, to be seen at large by the assembled lecturer's audience, must be strong and coarse in the main, and exhibit some tenderer tones to the near benches in front.

"For a man of my level," says Swift of himself, "I have as bad a name almost as I deserve! and I pray God that those who give it me, may never have reason to give me a better." He does not, you see,

set up for perfection, but through his present maligners he slaps his after-biographers in the face, who, if they be hurt, will deny the wit or omit it, and prefer instant a charge of hypocrisy. Angel or fiend! how charitable or how unmerciful are lecturers and biographers! and, being so able to distinguish and choose, how very good they must be themselves! Did the reader ever happen to see a life of Tiberius with two title-pages, both taken from historical authorities; two characters of one and the same person; made up, too, of recorded facts? He is "that imitable monarch Tiberius," during most of his reign "the universal dispenser of the blessings of peace," yet "he permitted the worst of civil wars to rage at Rome!" We may venture to use the words of the essayist, speaking of Swift—"We doubt whether the histories of the world can furnish, for example and instruction, for wonder and pity, for admiration and scorn, for approval and condemnation, a specimen of humanity at once so illustrious and so small." We have, from perfect authorities, Tiberius handed down for detestation and for universal admiration. The testimonies are not weak; they are alike strong, and equally accepted standards of historical evidence and literature. "Swift stood a living enigma." It should seem there have been many such enigmas. Shakspeare, who knew all nature, gave the world one to make out as it can. Grave history offers another. The novelist, M. de Wailly, has tried his hand at this enigma—Swift; but the Frenchman, like most French novelists, went altogether out of nature to establish impossible theories. A dramatist might reduce the tale within the limits of nature, if he could but once, for a few moments, be behind the scenes of truth's theatre—if he knew accurately all the facts, or perhaps one or two facts that time has concealed, and perhaps ever will conceal; and which, discovered, would solve the enigma at once. Of course, the great enigma lies in Swift's amours. These apart, no man would ever have ventured to assert the life-long madness of Swift. Great men and little have had, and, as long as the world lasts, will have their amours, honest ones and dishonest; but, excepting for romance-writing and gossiping of a day, such themes have been thought unworthy history, and to be but slightly notable even in biography. Their natural secrecy has hitherto covered the correct ones with a sanctity, and the incorrect with a darker veil, that it is better not to lift; nor is it easy at all times to distinguish the right from the wrong. The living resent the scrutiny: we do not admire the impertinence, nor easily admit the privilege of an amatorial inquisition upon the characters of the dead. And what has curiosity gathered, after all, which ought to justify honest people in maligning Swift, Stella, or Vanessa? A mass of contradictions. They cannot all be true. Even Stella's marriage, stated as a fact by so many writers, is denied, and upon as fair evidence as its supposition. The first account of it is given as many as seven years after Swift's death, and twenty-four years after Stella's. There are two versions with respect to the dying scene, and supposed dialogue regarding the marriage. They con-

tradict each other; for, in the one, Swift is made brutally to leave the room, and never to have seen her after; in the other, to have desired to acknowledge the marriage, and that Stella said, "It is too late." Who knows if either be true? and what means "It is too late?" Do those few simple words, overheard, necessarily imply any such acknowledgment? But there is proof that one malicious statement is false. "This behavior," says Mr. Thomas Sheridan (not Dr. Sheridan, the friend of Swift, for whom he has been mistaken, and weight accordingly given to his statement,) "threw Mrs. Johnson into unspeakable agonies, and for a time she sunk under the weight of so cruel a disappointment. But soon after, roused by indignation, she inveighed against his cruelty in the bitterest terms; and sending for a lawyer, made her will, bequeathing her fortune by her own name, to charitable uses." It is said this was done in the presence of Dr. Sheridan, but the narrator was a mere lad when his father, from whom he is said to have received it, died. But this very will is, if not of Swift's dictation, the will he had wished her to make (compare it with Swift's own will—the very phraseology is strongly indicative of his dictation;) for he had thus written to Mr. Worrall when in London, during Stella's severe illness: "I wish it could be brought about that she might make her will. Her intentions are to leave the interest of all her fortune to her mother and sister during their lives, afterward to Dr. Stevens' hospital, to purchase lands for such uses as she designs it." Upon this Mr. Wilde, author of *The Closing Year's of Dean Swift's Life*, remarks most properly: "Now, such was not only the tenor, but the very words of the will made two years afterward, which Sheridan (Thomas, not Dr. Sheridan) would have his readers believe was made in pique at the Dean's conduct." Then it follows, that if this paragraph in the tale, and told as a consequence of the previous paragraph, is untrue, as it is proved to be, the first part, the brutal treatment, falls to the ground. In any court the evidence would be blotted from the record. It is curious, and may have possibly some bearing upon the Platonic love of Swift and Stella, that she should, in this will, have been so enamored of celibacy, that she enjoins it upon the chaplain whom she appointed to read prayers and preach at the hospital. "It is likewise my will that the said chaplain be an unmarried man at the time of his election, and so continue while he enjoys the office of chaplain to the said hospital." This will is also curious and worthy of notice in another respect. Among the slanders upon Swift and Stella, it had been circulated that she had been not only his mistress but had had a child by him; and an old bell-ringer's testimony was adduced for the fact. There may be in the mind of the reader quite sufficient reasons to render the story impossible; but one item of the will is a bequest to this supposed child by name. "I bequeath to Bryan M'Loglin (a child who now lives with me, and whom I keep on charity) twenty-five pounds, to bind him out apprentice as my executors, or the survivors of them, shall think fit." Now, this is the great case

of cruelty against Swift, and we think it is satisfactorily disposed of. Have we any other notice given that Swift behaved brutally to Stella? None. Where is there any evidence of her complaining? but there is evidence of the tenderest affection on Swift's part. Stella's letters have never seen the light; but, if we may judge by the answers to them, there could have been no charge of cruelty brought against him by her. The whole is an assumption from this narrative of Sheridan the son, and, as we have shown, altogether a misconception or a dream of his. Even with respect to Stella's parentage authors do not agree—yet each speaks as positively as if he had been at the birth. Swift himself says that her father was a younger brother of a good family in Nottinghamshire, and her mother of a lower degree. Some assert that she was the natural daughter of Sir Wm. Temple. Johnson says, the daughter of Sir Wm. Temple's steward; but, in contradiction to this, it is pretty clear that her mother did not marry this steward, whose name was Mosse, till after Sir Wm. Temple's death, when Stella was in Ireland. Sir William left her a thousand pounds, and, it is said, declared to her her parentage. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1757, who knew Stella's mother and was otherwise well acquainted with facts, is urged, in indignation at the treacherous and spiteful narrative by Lord Orrery, to write a defense of the Dean. From this source, what others had indeed suspected is strongly asserted—that Swift was himself the natural son of Temple. He thus continues: "When Stella went to Ireland, a marriage between her and the Dean could not be foreseen; but when she thought proper to communicate to her friends the Dean's proposal, and her approbation of it, it was then become absolutely necessary for that person, who alone knew the secret history of the parties concerned, to reveal what otherwise might have been buried in oblivion. But was the Dean to blame because he was ignorant of his natural relation to Stella? or can he justly be censured because it was not made known to him before the day of the marriage? He admired her; he loved her; he pitied her; and when fate placed the everlasting barrier between them, their affection became a true Platonic love, if not something yet more exalted. . . . We are sometimes told that upon the Hanoverian family succeeding to the throne of Great Britain, Swift renounced all hopes of further preferment, and that his temper became more morose and more intolerable every year. I acknowledge the fact in part; but it was not the loss of his hopes that soured Swift alone; this was the unlucky epocha of that discovery that convinced the Dean that the only woman in the world who could make him happy as a wife, was the only woman in the world who could not be that wife." Delany also entertained a suspicion in agreement with this account. The supposition would seem to throw light upon a mysterious passage in Swift's life, and to be sufficient explanation of all his behavior to Stella. "Immediately subsequent to the ceremony (the marriage) Swift's state of mind," says Scott, "appears to have been

dreadful. Delany, as I have heard from a friend of his relict, being pressed to give his opinion on this strange union, said, that about the time it took place he observed Swift to be extremely gloomy and agitated—so much so, that he went to Archbishop King to mention his apprehensions. On entering the library, Swift rushed out with a countenance of distraction and passed him without speaking. He found the archbishop in tears, and upon asking the reason, he said, 'You have just met the most unhappy man on earth, but on the subject of his wretchedness you must never ask a question.' " Sir Walter Scott does not admit this story in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but we doubt if the reason of his doubt, or rejection of it, be quite satisfactory. "It is enough to say that Swift's parents resided in Ireland from before 1665 until his birth in 1667, and that Temple was residing in Holland from April 1666 until January 1668. Lord Orrery says until 1670." Dates, it appears, are not always accurately ascertained. We cannot determine that ambassadors have no latitude for a little ubiquity; but there is one very extraordinary circumstance with regard to Swift's childhood, that seems to involve in it no small degree of mystery. "It happened, by whatever accident, that Jonathan was not suckled by his mother, but by a nurse, who was a native of Whitehaven; and when he was about a year old, her affection for him was become so strong, that, finding it necessary to visit a relation who was dangerously sick, and from whom she expected a legacy, she found means to convey the child on shipboard without the knowledge of his mother or his uncle, and carried him with her to Whitehaven. At this place he continued near three years; for when the matter was discovered, his mother sent orders not to hazard a second voyage till he should be better able to bear it. The nurse, however, gave other testimonies of her affection to Jonathan, for during his stay at Whitehaven she had him taught to spell, and when he was five years old he was able to read a chapter in the Bible."

This undoubted incident is no small temptation to a novelist to spin a fine romance, and affiliate the child according to his fancy. It is a strange story—a very poor widow not suckling her own child! kept three years away from a parent, lest, having borne one voyage well, the young child should not be able to bear a second! The said novelist may find sufficient reason for the mother in after years recommending him to Sir William Temple, and perhaps weave into his story that the nominal mother was one intrusted with a charge not her own. Stella's mother's connection with the Temple family may be as rationally accounted for. The writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, already quoted, seems to have had this account of Johnston from the widow herself. "This gentlewoman (Stella's mother) was the widow (as she always averred) of one Johnston, a merchant, who, having been unfortunate in trade, afterward became master of a trading sloop, which ran between England and Holland, and there died." Then, again, to revert to the entanglement of this mystery, although it is received that there was a marriage—a

private marriage, as it is said, in the garden, by the Bishop of Clogher—are there really sufficient grounds for a decision in the affirmative? It is traced only to Delany and Sheridan (who could not have known it but by hearsay,) and the assertion, on suspicion, of the worst of all evidences with regard to Swift, Orrery (he only knew him in his declining years, as he confesses;) but Dr. Lyon, Swift's executor, denied it; and Mrs. Dingley, who came to Ireland, after Sir William Temple's death, with Stella, and lived with her till her death, laughed at it as an idle tale. Mrs. Brent, with whom the Dean's mother lodged, and who subsequently was his housekeeper, never believed it, and often told her daughter so, who succeeded her as housekeeper. It is said the secret was told to Bishop Berkeley by the Bishop of Clogher. "But," says Sir Walter Scott, "I must add, that if, as affirmed by Mr. Monck Mason, Berkeley was in Italy from the period of the marriage to the death of the Bishop of Clogher, this communication could not have taken place." With evidence so conflicting even as to the marriage—so uncertain—and if a marriage, as to the relationship between the parties—as to the time of discovery—and with that maddening possibility of Swift's physical infirmity alluded to by Scott; it does appear that it is the assumption of a very cruel critical right, to fasten upon the character of Swift a charge of fiendishness and brutality toward Stella. Where there are so many charitable ways of accounting for his conduct, most of which might well move our admiration and our pity, and where the tenderness of the parties toward each other cannot for a moment be doubted (*vide* Swift's diary in his letters, and his most touching letter speaking of her death and burial,) there is nothing more improbable, nothing more out of nature, than the acquiescence of both Swift and Stella in a condition which might well have driven both mad, if that condition had been avoidable. We have a hesitation in believing in self-made monsters. Novelists, romance-writers, and dramatists, conjure them up for their hour on the stage, but it is a novelty to admit them into a biography which professes to be true. As to Lord Orrery, the first slanderer of Swift after his death, we have a perfect contempt for his character. He sought the aged Swift for his own ends. His father had bequeathed away from him his library; in his vexation he thought to vindicate himself by an ambition to become a literary character. As Alcibiades sought Socrates, not for Socrates' virtues, but because his wisdom might aid him in his political schemes; so Lord Orrery took the leading literary characters of the day, and especially Swift, into what companionship he might. He cajoled and flattered the old man, and at his death maligned him. There was hypocrisy, too; for it was contemptible in him to have pretended a friendship so warm, with a man whom he designated as a tyrant, a brute, and irreligious. The world are keen to follow evil report. The ill life which is told by a *friend* is authentic enough for subsequent writers, who, like sheep, go over the hedge after their leader. The writer in the Gentleman's Magazine for November, 1757,

speaks as one intimately, and of long continuance, acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. He says significantly that he thinks *there are some living who have it in their power, from authentic materials, to throw light upon the subject.* That he was well acquainted with her mother we learn from the following passage: "I saw her myself in the autumn of 1742 (about a year before her death,) and although far advanced in years, she still preserved the remains of a very fine face." He minutely describes Stella's person as one who had seen her. "Let those judge who have been so happy as to have seen this Stella, this Hetty Johnston, and let those who have not, judge from the following description"—and as one who had conversed with her; "Her mind was yet more beautiful than her person, and her accomplishments were such as to do honor to the man who was so happy as to call her daughter." He tells the anecdote (for which he says, "I have undoubted authority") of her presence of mind and courage in firing a pistol at a robber on a ladder about to enter her room at night. He tells the time, and implies the cause of her leaving Moor Park to reside in Ireland. "As soon as she was woman enough to be intrusted with her own conduct, she left her mother, and Moor Park, and went to Ireland to reside, by the order of Sir William, who was yet alive. She was conducted thither by Swift; *but of this I am not positive*, as I am that her mother parted with her as one who was never to see her again." Upon that fact, then, he is positive, and scrupulous of assertion where not so. May it be conjectured he had the information from the mother herself, when he saw her so near the time of her death? He asserts that Sir William often "recommended her tender innocence to the protection of Swift, *as she had no declared male relation that could be her defender*;" that "from that time when they received the proper notice of the secrets of the family, they took care to converse before witnesses, even though they had never taken such precaution before." "Can we wonder," he adds, "that they should spend one day in the year in fasting, praying, and tears, from this period to her death? Might it not be the anniversary of their marriage?" "Swift had more forcible reasons for not owning Stella for his wife, than his lordship (Orrery) has allowed; and that it was not his behavior, but her own unhappy situation, that might perhaps shorten her days." The contributor, who signs himself C. M. P. G. N. S. T. N. S., writes purposely to vindicate the character of Swift from the double slander of Lord Orrery, who impeaches "the Dean's charity, his tenderness, and even his humanity, in consequence of his hitherto unaccountable behavior to his Stella, and of his long resentment shown to his sister." Lord Orrery had said that Swift had persisted in not owning his marriage from pride, because he had reproached his sister for marrying a low man, and would never see her or communicate with her after her marriage. That as Stella was also of low origin, he feared his reproaches might be thrown back upon himself. Then follows an entire contradiction of this unlikely

statement or surmise of Orrery—for that, “after her husband’s and Lady Gifford’s death, she (the sister, Mrs. Fenton) retired to Farnham, and boarded with Mrs. Mayne, Mrs. Mosse boarding there at the same time, with whom she lived in the greatest intimacy; and as she had not enough to maintain her, the Dean paid her an annuity as long as she lived—neither was that annuity a trifle.” Another correspondent in the same Magazine—for December, 1757—as desirous of vindicating the Dean, yet, nevertheless, points out a supposed error with regard to the passage in which mention is made of “the unlucky epocha of that discovery,” being that of the accession of the Hanoverian family, and the loss of Swift’s hopes. “But this,” he says, “is inconsistent with Swift’s marrying her in 1716, as (in page 487) we are told he did; or in 1717, in which year, I think, Lord Orrery places this event.” We think this is being too precise. Lord Oxford was impeached and sent to the Tower in 1715, which is sufficiently near to be called the same epocha. Or even if we take the accession from the death of Queen Anne—August 1714—the disappointment must have been rankling in the mind of Swift, still fresh, at the time of the other event. He likewise notices that Sir William Temple was abroad at and before Swift’s birth; but, for reasons we have given, we think this objection of no importance. No mention is made of Vanessa in the article in the Gentleman’s Magazine. The author seems cautiously, conscientiously, to abstain from every item of Orrery’s narrative, but such as he was assured of from his own knowledge.

Johnson, in his life of Swift, speaks disparagingly of Stella’s wit and accomplishments. It was displeasing to the great lexicographer that a woman should spell badly. Bad spelling was, we apprehend, the feminine accomplishment of the day. Dr. Drake, in his essay on the literature and manners of that age, says, “It was not wonderful that our women could not spell, when it may be said that our men had not yet learnt to read.”

We prefer Swift’s account of this matter. She was “versed,” he says, “in Greek and Roman history—spoke French perfectly—understood Platonic and Epicurean philosophy, and judged very well of the defects of the latter. She made judicious abstracts of the books she had read,” etc. Of her manners: “It was not safe nor prudent in her presence to offend in the least word against modesty, for she then gave full employment to her wit, her contempt, and resentment, under which stupidity and brutality were forced to sink into confusion; and the guilty person, by her future avoiding him like a bear or a satyr, was never in a way to transgress again.” She thus replied to a coxcomb who tried to put the ladies in her company to the blush: “Sir, all these ladies and I understand your meaning very well, having, in spite of our care, too often met with those of your sex who wanted manners and good sense. But, believe me, neither virtuous nor even vicious women love such kind of conversation. However, I will leave you, and report your behavior; and whatever visit I make, I shall first inquire at the door whether

you are in the house, that I may be sure to avoid you.” “She understood the nature of government, and could point out all the errors of Hobbes, both in that and religion.” This letter of Swift’s is full of her praise; but we know nothing more touching than the passage which speaks of his sickening feelings at the hour of her burial. “*January 30, Tuesday*.—This is the night of the funeral, which my sickness will not suffer me to attend. It is now nine at night, and I am removed into another apartment that I may not see the light in the church, which is just over against the window of my bed-chamber.” Were these words written by a *cruel* man!! Well, if so, we must admire a woman’s saying—as it is put by Mr. Thackeray: “Ah, it was a hard fate that wrung from them so many tears, and stabbed pitilessly”—(alas, Mr. Thackeray, why will you put in that odious *pitilessly*?)—“that pure and tender bosom! A hard fate; but would she have changed it? I have heard a woman say that she would have taken Swift’s cruelty to have had his tenderness.” And why, Mr. Thackeray, will you say of such a man, when he was writing that they had removed him into another apartment, that he might not see the light in the church, and was praising her and loving her when he could speak or write a word—why, we ask, should you say, “in contemplation of her goodness, his *hard* heart melts into pathos.” Your own heart was a little ossifying into hardness when you wrote this. Ah! did you wish your female audience to think how much more tender you could be yourself? and so did you offer this little apology for some hard things in your novels? We wish you had written an essay, and not read a lecture. You would have been both less *hard* and less tender—for, in truth, your tender passages in this life of Swift, are very well to the purpose, to catch your audience; but they are “*nihil ad rem*.” And your appeal to the “pure and tender bosoms,” all against poor Swift, as a detestable cannibal—how, in his Modest Proposal, “he rages against children,” and “enters the nursery with the tread and gayety of an ogre,” how he thought the “loving and having children” an “unreasonableness,” and “love and marriage” a “folly,” because in his Lilliputian kingdom the state removed children from their parents and *educated* them; and you wind up your appeal so lovingly, so charmingly, so devotedly, so insinuatingly to your fair audience, upon the blessings of conjugal love and philoprogenitiveness, that you must be the dearest of lecturers, the pet of families, the destroyer of ogres; and, as to that monster Swift, the very children should cry out, as they do in the Children in the Wood, “Kill him again, Mr. Thackeray.” And this you did, knowing all the while that the Modest Proposal was a patriotic and political satire—one of real kindness to the people, whose children he supposes, in the depth of his feeling and his satire and bitter irony, the government should encourage the getting rid of, rather than, in defiance of all his (the Dean’s) schemes for the benefit of Ireland, they should be made a burthen to their parents, and miserable themselves. All this you knew very well; it was shabby and shameful of

you by your mere eloquence to make this grave irony appear or be felt as a reality and a cruelty, and tack on to it an importation from Lilliput of a state edict, as if it were one in Swift's mind with the Modest Proposal. Yes—you knew, the while these your words were awakening detestation of Swift, you were oratorizing a very great sham—all nonsense—stuff—that would never pass current but through the stamp of lectureship. You knew how the witty Earl Bathurst, a kind father with his loved children about him, as good-naturedly as you should have done, received Swift's benevolently intended satire. "A man who has nine children to feed," says Lord Bathurst to Swift, "can't long afford *alienos pascere nummos*; but I have four or five that are very fit for the table. I only wait for the Lord Mayor's Day to dispose of the largest, and shall be sure of getting off the youngest whenever a certain great man (Sir R. Walpole) makes another entertainment at Chelsea." Here are your false words to win all feminine sympathy. "In fact, our great satirist was of opinion that conjugal love was unadvisable, and illustrated the theory by his own practice and example—God help him!—which made him about the most wretched being in God's world." How cruel was this in you, under some of the probabilities, and all the possibilities that may be, ought to be, charitably referred to Swift's case—in his loves or his friendships, be they what they will, for Stella and Vanessa. Vanessa—have we then all this while forgotten Vanessa? Hers is indeed a curious story. It is told in Swift's poem of "Cadenus and Vanessa," and published after her death, at the dying orders of Vanessa herself.

At the time Swift was moving in the higher circles in London, he appears to have been remarkable for the gracefulness of his manners and his conversational powers. These accomplishments won for him many friendships in the female society in which he found himself. Indeed, in his letters, his female correspondence possesses a great charm, and speaks very highly in favor of the wit and accomplishments of the really well-educated women of the day. Swift lived in great familiarity with the Vanhomrighs. The eldest daughter, (another Esther,) ardent by nature, and desirous of improving her mind, earnestly gave herself up to Swift's converse and instruction. The result on her part was love, on Swift's friendship: it is possible he may have felt something stronger; but, with an inconsistency, those who charge him with a tenderer feeling deny him the power of entertaining it. The story is too well known to be repeated here. She confessed her passion, and he insisted upon friendship only. She followed him to Ireland. She so expressed her state of mind to him by letter, that Swift had certainly reason to apprehend fatal consequences, if he altogether broke off his intimacy. If it be true that Swift was by nature cold, it is some excuse for imprudence that he did not easily suspect, or perhaps know, the dangerous and seducing power of an attachment warmer than friendship. It is evident *he* professed nothing more. Whatever be the case in that respect, there is no reason to charge upon either an improper intimacy. Mr. Thackeray

thinks the two women died, killed by their love for, and treatment by Swift. It is possible love, and disappointed love, may have hastened both their deaths, and made the wretchedness of Swift. On all sides, the misery was one for compassion, and such compassion as may charitably cover much blame. But even the story of Vanessa is told differently. There is little certainty to go upon, but enough for any man who pleases to write vilely on. Lord Orrery it very unmerciful on the character of Vanessa. He, in downright terms, charges her with having thrown away her virtue and her religion, preferring passion to one and wit to the other. This certainly gives him a good latitude for maligning his friend. Did he ever give his friend Swift a piece of his mind, and say to him, he thought him a rascal, and would discontinue his friendship? Oh, no; it was pleasanter, and very friendly, to tell all his spiteful things, after the Dean was dead, to "his Ham," that they might be handed down to the world from "father to son," and so the world must know "you would have smiled to have found his house a constant seraglio of very virtuous women, who attended him from morning till night, with an obedience, an awe, and an assiduity, that are seldom paid to the richest or the most powerful lovers; no, not even to the Great Signior himself." Yet the facetious father of "my Ham" never saw Stella, and knew perhaps as little of the seraglio. Sir Walter Scott says, as others also, we believe, that, upon Vanessa's applying to Stella herself to know the nature of the undefined connection between her and Swift, she received from Stella an acknowledgment of the marriage. If this were true, it would of course settle that question; but Lord Orrery, from whom the first statement of the marriage came, and who would readily have seized such a confirmation of his tale, says no such thing. On the contrary, he says Vanessa wrote the letter to Cadenus, not to Stella, and that Swift brought his own written reply, and, "throwing down the letter on her table, with great passion hastened back to his horse, carrying in his countenance the frowns of anger and indignation." How are we to trust to accounts so different? "She did not," he adds, "survive many days (he should have said weeks, but days tells more against *his friend*) the letter delivered to her by Cadenus, but during that short interval she was sufficiently composed to cancel a will, *made in Swift's favor*, and to make another," etc. Who will not ask the question—*Was there a will made in Swift's favor?* It is against probability; for be it remembered, that the same story was told with respect to Stella's will, and it has been clearly proved that her will was such as Swift wished her to make. Nor was it at all consistent with Swift's character, proud as he was, and always so cautious to avoid any scandal on Stella's account, that he would have allowed *her* to make a will in his favor; and it would have been still more revolting to his pride to have accepted a legacy from Vanessa.

Orrery treats poor Vanessa worse even than he does his friend. He conjectures her motives as

against Swift, and writes of her death, "under all the agonies of despair," which, unless he were present at the last scene, he is not justified in doing, and reviles her with a cruel uncharitableness. The worst that ought to be said of this miserable love and perplexing friendship is said by Scott—"It is easy for those who look back on this melancholy story to blame the assiduity of Swift or the imprudence of Vanessa. But the first deviation from the straight line of moral rectitude is, in such a case, so very gradual, and on the female side the shades of color which part esteem from affection, and affection from passion, are so imperceptibly heightened, that they who fail to stop at the exact point where wisdom bids, have much indulgence to claim from all who share with them the frailties of mortality."

More than a hundred and fifty years ago this sad tale, whatever it was in reality, yet now a mystery, was acted to the life in this strange world. The scandal of few real romances seldom lasts so long. It is time to cease pursuing it with feelings of a recent enmity; it is a better charity to hope, that all that was of difference, of vexation, of misery, nay, of wrong, has become as unsubstantial as their dust, and that they are where all that was of love is sure to be, for love is eternal. Poor Vanessa's dust may still rest in peace. Swift's and Stella's have not been allowed the common repose of the grave. Their bodies have been disturbed. The phrenologists have been busy with the skulls, and their unhallowed curiosity has been rewarded with a singular refutation of their doctrine. The peculiarities of Swift's skull are—"the extreme lowness of the forehead, those parts which the phrenologists have marked out as the organs of wit, causality, and comparison, being scarcely developed at all, but the head rose gradually from benevolence backward. The portion of the occipital bone assigned to the animal propensities, philoprogenitiveness and amativeness, etc., appeared excessive."

There is something very shocking in this disturbance of the dead. We are inclined to join in Shakespeare's imprecation on the movers of bones. Swift's larynx has been stolen, and is now, they say, in possession of the purloiner in America. We wish it had Swift's human utterance, that the thief might wish he had no ears. An itinerant phrenologist is now hawking about Pope's skull. Matthews' thigh-bone has circulated from house to house. If ghosts ever visit now-a-days our earth, we could wish them to come, armed each with a stout stick, and act upon the phrenologists the "Fatal Curiosity."

Johnson's line—

"And Swift expires a driveler and a show,"

if it was not justified, as it certainly was not, during the Dean's last years, in his melancholy state, may be justified as a prophecy, and fulfilled when his skull was handed about from fashionable house and party, and exhibited as a show.

Before we entirely quit the subject of Swift's amours, it is necessary to mention a serious offer of marriage which he certainly made, about the year 1696. The lady—Miss Jane Waring—did not at first

receive his advances very warmly. After four years the courtship came to an end. It seems Miss Waring became more complying as Swift cooled. In a letter he complained of her want of any real affection for him. It is so worded as to imply some doubts of her temper and judgment. He writes as a man would do who considers himself rather bound in honor than by love, and still offers marriage—upon terms. These terms, those who profess to be conversant in love proprieties, as in other branches of criticism, say no woman could comply with. We do not profess to determine cases of that nature. We apprehend all kinds of terms have been complied with on both sides without impeachment in the Court of Love. This offer of marriage, however, militates against Sir Walter Scott's hypothesis of physical unfitness, and rather strengthens the argument and statements of the writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. We believe the exact date of the supposed marriage has not been given. If it did take place, what if it should be possible it was on the day—his birthday (or what he pleases to call his birthday)—at the recurrence of which he bewailed his birth by reading the chapter in Job? Nor must we omit, as it shows the shallow grounds upon which defamation often rests, a charge of violation made against Swift at Kilroot, because such a charge was found to have been really made against one J. S., as it appeared in a magistrate's books. J. S. might have stood for Jonathan Swift—let him, therefore, bear the iniquity. It might have been fastened upon any or all of the numerous family of Smith, or any other J. S. in the world. It is curious that the first propagator, who, possibly with truth, denied having made the charge, as he might have said the letters J. S. only—as did the register—and unwittingly left the appropriation to his listeners;—it is curious, we observe, that this man became raving mad, and was an inmate in Swift's hospital. The idle tale has been disproved, and but one of his worst maligners repeats it.

There are no passages in this portion of Mr. Thackeray's Lectures more odious, and more repugnant to our taste and feeling, than those which charge Swift with irreligion; nor are they less offensive because the author says—"I am not here, of course, to speak of any man's religious views, except in so far as they influence his literary character, his life, his humor." This denying latitude really means quite the contrary to its preface; for, since religion does concern every man's life, and he writes or reads the life, he need not have said he had nothing (of course) to do with it, under any exceptions. But it serves the purposes of assuming a reluctance to touch upon the subject, and of charging upon the necessity of the case the many free and unnecessary animadversions upon Swift's character as a priest of the Church of England.

The lecturer far outdoes the false friend Orrery, who, speaking of his *Gulliver*, says, "I am afraid he glances at religion." It is true, he goes rather far to set up his friend the Dean as an example of punishment by Providence, which punishment he

admires and confesses as according to righteous ways. His lordship might have pitied, if angels weep. Not a bit of it. "Here," he says, "a reflection naturally occurs, which, without superstition, leads metacitly to admire and confess the ways of Providence. For this great genius, this mighty wit, who seemed to scorn and scoff at all mankind, lived not only to be an example of pride punished in his own person, and an example of terror to others, but lived to undergo some of the greatest miseries to which human nature is liable." Is this an instance of the charity which "covereth a multitude of sins," and which saith, "Judge not"? If his lordship had exercised on this occasion *his superstition*, which he thus adroitly puts aside, he would pretty much have resolved Swift's sins into a *material* necessity. Thus he philosophizes on vice and virtue as effects—"These effects take their sources from causes almost mechanical."

Mr. Thackeray is still more severe—more unjust. He will not allow his strictness in his religious duties, not even his family devotions to pass as current coin; they are shams and counterfeits. The Swift too proud to lie, was enacting hypocrisy in all this; and how lucidly conclusive the argument! Would any modern lecturer like to be tried by it? "The boon-companion of Pope and Bolingbroke, who chose these as the friends of his life, and the recipients of his confidence and affection, must have heard many an argument, and joined in many a conversation, over Pope's port or 'St. John's' burgundy, which would not bear to be repeated at other men's boards." "Must have heard."!! Had the lecturer been an eye and ear witness, he could not have said more. Yet this *must* is a very little must indeed. A letter of Bolingbroke's, and another from Pope to Swift, which the lecturer, as he ought to have done, had doubtless read, perfectly reduces the little *must* to nothing at all. Swift, it seems, had written to Pope in some way to convert him from Popery. Pope's reply parries off the dean's shafts by wit, and the letter is very pleasant. Not so Bolingbroke; and as he was of too free a spirit to be false, and a hypocrite, at the time he wrote his reply he was not that bold speculator in atheistical arguments which he may have afterward been; or if he was a hypocrite, that alternative defends Swift, for it shows the improbability of the arguments over the burgundy having been in their familiar converse; for Bolingbroke was at least no fool to contradict himself before Swift. These are his remarkable words, defending himself from the appellation of a freethinker, in it irreligious sense: "For since the truth of Christianity is as evident as matters of fact, on the belief of which so much depends, ought to be, and agreeable to all our ideas of justice, these freethinkers (such as he had described) must needs be Christians on the best foundation—on that which St. Paul himself established, (I think it was St. Paul,) *Omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete*." It is not needful for us to vindicate Bolingbroke, nor even to express any great satisfaction at this passage; our purpose is to show Swift's religious sincerity, and the probable nature

of the conversations with Pope and Bolingbroke, from these letters.

But to the excess of severity in the lecturer. He contrasts "Harry Fielding and Dick Steele" with Swift for religious sincerity. These "were," he says, "especially loud, and I *believe fervent*, in their expressions of belief." He admits them to have been *unreasoning*, and Church of England men. "But Swift, his mind had had a different schooling, and possessed a very different logical power. He was not bred up in a tipsy guardroom, and did not learn to reason in a Covent Garden tavern. He could conduct an argument from beginning to end. He could see forward with a fatal clearness. In his old age, looking at the Tale of a Tub, when he said, 'Good God! what a genius I had when I wrote that book!' I think he was admiring, not the genius, but the consequences to which the genius had brought him—a vast genius, a magnificent genius—a genius wonderfully bright, and dazzling, and strong, to seize, to know, to see, to flash upon falsehood, and scorch it into perdition, to penetrate into the hidden motives, and expose the black thoughts of men; an awful, an evil spirit:" and yet Mr. Thackeray would make this evil spirit a spirit of truth, of logical power, of brightness to seize, to know, to see, to flash upon falsehood; in fact, that irreligion was the natural result of true good logical reasoning, and therefore Swift had no religion. We have no business to charge the lecturer with irreligious sentiments; indeed, we feel assured that he had no irreligious motive whatever in the utterance of this passage; nor could he have had, with any discretion, before a mixed modern audience; in the hurry of his eloquence, he overlooked the want of precise nicety of expression due to such a subject. We could wish that he had otherwise worded this passage, which, to the minds of the many, will certainly convey a notion that the legitimate conclusion of reasonable logical arguments is infidelity. Yet more. "Ah! man! you educated in the Epicurean Temple's library—you, whose friends were Pope and St. John—what made you to swear to fatal vows, and bind yourself to a life-long hypocrisy before Heaven, which you adored with such real wonder, humility, and reverence? For Swift's was a reverent spirit; for Swift could love and could pray." But his love, according to the lecturer, was cruelty, and his prayer a sham!! Let no man ever own a friend, however he became his friend, of dubious opinions. The lecturer is cautious. Miss Martineau sent her mind into a diseased cow, and it was healed. Pope and Bolingbroke *must* have sent theirs into Swift, and he was Bolingbroke and Paped to the utmost corruption and defilement. We may here as well ask how poor Swift was positively to know the ultimate sceptical opinions of Bolingbroke? They were published in his works, by Mallet, after his lordship's death.

Johnson doubted not the sincerity of Swift's religion. He vindicates the Tale of a Tub, which Mr. Thackeray makes a text for his vituperation; from "ill intention." "He was a Churchman rationally

zealous." "To his duty as a Dean he was very attentive." "In his church he restored the practice of weekly communion, and distributed the sacramental elements in the most solemn and devout manner with his own hands. He came to his church every morning, preached commonly in his turn, and attended the evening anthem, that it might not be negligently performed." Swift himself spoke disparagingly of his sermons. Mr. Thackeray does more than take him at his word; he pronounces that "they have scarce a Christian characteristic. They might be preached from the steps of a synagogue, or the floor of a mosque, or the box of a coffee-house almost. There is little or no cant; he is too great and too proud for that; and, so far as the badness of his sermons goes, he is honest." Is Mr. Thackeray really a judge of "Christian characteristics?" or does he pronounce without having read Swift's sermon on the Trinity, so much and so deservedly admired, and certainly of a Christian character? But of these sermons quite as good a judge is Samuel Johnson as our lecturer, who says, "This censure of himself, if judgment be made from those sermons which have been printed, was unreasonably severe." Johnson ascribes the suspicion of irreligion to his dread of hypocrisy. Mr. Thackeray makes hypocrisy his religion. Even the essayist in the Times, who considers him a madman from his birth, admits him to have been "sincerely religious, scrupulously attentive to the duties of his holy office, vigorously defending the position and privileges of his order: he positively played into the hands of infidelity, by the steps he took, both in his conduct and writings, to expose the cant and hypocrisy, which he detested as heartily as he admired and practiced unaffected piety." If, then, according to this writer, there was a mistake, it was not of his heart. What different judgments, and of so recent dates—a sincerely religious man, of practical unaffected piety, and, *per contra*, a long-life hypocrite before Heaven. We may well say, "Look on this picture and on this." Reflect, reader, upon the double title-page to Life of Tiberius, on the mysteries of every man's life; and the seeming contradictions which can never be explained here. A simple truth might explain them, but truth hides itself, and historians and biographers cannot afford time for accurate search, nor the reading world patience for the delays which truth's narrative would demand.

The Tale of a Tub, it has been said, was the obstacle to Swift's preferment—it may have been the ostensible excuse. If the Duchess of Somerset went down on her knees to prevent a bishopric being offered him, another excuse was wanted than the real one. It was ascribed to Swift that he had ridiculed her red hair: such a crime is seldom forgiven. But the "*spretæ injuria formæ*" will not be producible as an objection. This Tale of a Tub has been often condemned and excused, and will be while literature lasts, and is received amongst persons of different temperaments. There are some so grave that wit is condemned by them before they know the subject upon which it is exercised. To

many it is folly, because beyond their conception. We know no reason why the man of wit should not be religious; if there be, wit is a crime; yet it is a gift of nature, and so imperative upon the possessor, that he can scarcely withhold it. It is his genius. Wit has its logical forms of argument. Errors in religion, as in manners, present themselves to the man of wit both in a serious and ludicrous light; the two views combine, there is the instant flash for illumination or destruction. The corruptions in a church, as in that of Rome, being the growth of ages, engrafted into the habits and manners of a people, are not to be put down by solemn sermons only: arguments in a new and captivating manner must be adopted, and applied to the ready understanding and familiar common sense of those on whom more grave and sedate argumentation is lost.

The Reformers were not remiss to take wit as an ally. Even now, those who are temporarily shocked at the apparent lightness with which it was employed in former days, as they read works such as the Tale of a Tub may have received with it solid arguments, never so vividly put to them, and which are still excellent preservatives against Romanism. The enemy who does not like it will call it ribaldry, buffoonery, and magnify it into a deadly sin. The vituperation of it marks its power. This kind of writing, even on the gravest subjects, is more defensible than those who are hurt by it will admit. In a state of warfare, and church is militant, we must not throw away legitimate arms. If wit be a gift, it is a legitimate weapon, and a powerful one. It deals terrible blows on the head of hypocrisy. We owe to it more perhaps than we think. It may be fairly asked, Were the Provincial Letters injurious to the cause of religion? The Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum helped to demolish some strongholds of iniquity. Rabelais, disgusting as he is to modern readers in too many parts, was acceptable to bishops and archbishops. They pardoned much for the depth of sense, knowledge of mankind, and solid learning in the curate of Meudon. There are offenses against taste, that are not necessarily offenses against religion. There is many an offensive work, especially in modern literature, where taste is guarded and religion hurt. Is there a natural antipathy between wit and religion, or between wit and morals? We trust not; for by it all mankind may be reached—at least those who can be reached by no other appeal, to whom that may be the first, thought not the last. In times of controversy all must come into the field, the light-armed as well as the heavy-armed, and they must use their own weapons. David slew Goliath with a pebble and a sling. He had tried these; they were scorned by the giant, but they slew him. But this genius of art is imperative, and unless you shut the church-doors against it, and anathematize it, (and to do so would be dangerous,) it will throw about its weapons. Danger cannot put it down. It has its minor seriousness, though you see it not; it has its deep wisdom, and such an abundance of gravity, that it can afford to play with it. It bids the man endowed with it use it even upon the

scaffold, as did Sir Thomas More. Admit, that, if it is a power for good or evil, that very admission legitimizes it. The infidel, the scoffer, will use it, and he will be in the enemy's camp. Yes, we must have, in the gravest cause, our sharpshooters too. There have been buffoons for the gravest purposes as for the vilest. It is well to be cautious in condemning all. Demosthenes could not prevail upon the people of Athens to give attention to him where their safety was concerned, and he abandoned his seriousness, and told them a story of the "shadow of an ass." Buffoonery may be a part put on—the disguise, but the serious purpose is under it. Brutus was an able actor. A man may be allowed to put on a madness, when it would be death to proclaim himself, so as to be believed, in his senses. What shall we say of the grave buffoon, the wittiest, the wisest, the patriotic, who risked his life to play the fool, because he knew it was the only means of convincing the people, when he, Aristophanes, could not get an actor to take the part of Cleon, and took it himself, not knowing but that a cup of poison awaited him when the play was ended? It is as well to come to the conclusion that the wit, even the buffoon, may be respectable—nay, give them a higher name—even great characters. Their gifts are instincts, are meant for use. As the poet says, they cut in twain weighty matters: "*Magnas plerumque secant res.*" We fear that if we were to drive the lighter soldiers of wit out of the religious camp, those enlisted on the opposite side would set up a shout, rush in, and, setting about them lustily, have things pretty much their own way. Apply this as at least an apology for Swift. You must have the man with his wit—it was his uncontrollable passion. And, be it remembered, when he conceived, if not wrote, the Tale of a Tub, he was in the riotous spirit of his youth. And abstract from it its wondrous argument, deep sense of illustration, and weigh them, how ponderous the mass is, how able to crush the long age-constructed machinery of designing Popery! But heavy as is the abstract, it would have lain inert matter, but for those nicely-adjusted springs of wit, which, light as they seem, lift buoyantly the ponderous power, that it may fall where directed. If any have a Romish tendency, we would recommend him to read the Tale of a Tub, without fear that it will take religion out of his head or his heart. We perfectly agree with Johnson as to the *intention*, in contradiction to Mr. Thackeray, who says, "The man who wrote that wild book could not but be aware what must be the sequel of the propositions he laid down." And thus it is cruelly added, "It is my belief that he suffered frightfully from the consciousness of his own scepticism, and that he had bent his pride so far down as to put his apostacy out to hire." Charity, which "believeth all things," never believed that.

The virtues reign by turns in this world of ours. Each one is the Queen Quintessence of her time, and commands a fashion upon her subjects. They bear the hue of her livery in their aspects. What is in their bosoms it is not so easy to determine; their

tongues are obedient to the fashion, and often join in chorus of universal cant. Philanthropy is now the common language, we doubt if it is the common doing, of the age. We are rather suspicious of it, not very well liking its connections, equality and fraternity, and suspect it to be of a spurious breed, considering some of its exhibitions on the stage of the world within the memory of many of us. As the *aura popularis* has been long, and is still blowing rather strong from that quarter, it may appear "brutal" to say a syllable *per contra*. There never was a fitter time to lift up the hands and eyes in astonishment at Swift's misanthropy. See the monster, how he hated mankind! Perhaps he was a misanthrope. That he was a good hater we verily believe, but for a misanthrope he was one of the kindest to those who deserved and needed his assistance. It is said of him that he made the fortunes of forty families—that when he had power, he exerted it to the utmost, perseveringly, to advance the interests of this or that man, and did many acts of benevolence secretly and delicately;—witness his payment to Mrs. Dingley of £52 per annum, which he made her believe was her own; and he paid it as her agent for money in the funds, and took her receipt accordingly, and this was not known till after his death. Very numerous are the anecdotes of this nature, but here we have no space for them. Such misanthropes are not very bad people—even though, detesting the assumption of uncommon philanthropy, they put on now and then a little roughness, as Swift undoubtedly did, and many very kind people very often do. But he wrote *Gulliver*, that bitter satire on mankind, for which Mr. Thackeray the lecturer is greatly shocked at him. "As for the moral, I think it is horrible, shameful, unmanly, blasphemous; and, giant and great as this Dean is, I say we should hoot him." Certainly hoot him—pelt him out of your Vanity Fair, which, though bad enough, is far too good for him, for the law there is to treat bad mankind very tenderly, and to make the good come off but second best, and look a trifle ridiculous. There have been strong vigorous satirists, universally read and admired, and made the stock literature of all countries too, and the authors have been hitherto thought highly moral and dignified characters; and they were personal, too, as ever Swift was (not that we admire his personalities—they were part his, and part belonged to his time,) and their language as coarse. What are we to say of Juvenal, if we condemn Swift on that score? What of his sixth and tenth satires? The yahoo for mankind is not more hideous than the Tabraca monkey, which so frightfully represents men's old age, in that famous tenth satire on the "Vanity of Human Wishes." It is, indeed, a morbid philanthropy, a maudlin philanthropy, that will not give detested vices the lash. What is brutal vice?—degraded human nature, such as our police courts have of late exhibited it, our Cannons, and kickers, and beaters of women—the burkers of our times, murderers for the sake of body-selling, to whom yahoos are as far better creatures. Yet, in our philanthropic days, we must not compare man

to low animals. Indeed, we make companion of the faithful dog—we pet the obedient horse—we love them—and we are better for the affection we bestow, and it is in a great degree perhaps reciprocal; but such brutes in human shape, we shrink from comparing our dumb friends with them. They have made themselves an antipathy to human nature, and our nature an antipathy to them.

One would think, to hear some people talk about this *Gulliver*, that Swift had originated such hideous comparisons with the brute creation, and that he alone had brought his *animali parlanti* on the stage. Chaucer, whom everybody loves, makes the cock say, as thus Dryden says it for him:—

“And I with pleasure see
Man strutting on two legs, and aping me.”
Cock and Fox.

But let us put the matter thus: In depicting the lowest vices of human nature, Swift, like Hogarth, made them appear more odious, and the former less offensive, by at least ideally or rather formally removing them from our species. The transforming them to brutes in something *like* human shape, renders the human image less distinct; covers them with a gauze, through which you can bear the sight, and contemplate what brutalized human nature may become. The satirist Hogarth is as strong, and by too near a resemblance, more disgusting, yet is he a great moralist. Is the Yahoo of Swift worse, or so offensive to our pride, as the heroes and heroines of “Beer and Gin Alley,” or the cruelty scenes of Hogarth? Yet who ever called these doings of the painter-satirist “shameful, unmanly, blasphemous.” Hoot *him*, Mr. Lecturer, hoot both or neither. No—the hoot of the lecturer was nothing but a little oratorical extravagance, for an already indignant audience, touched upon that tender modern virtue, general philanthropy. Out of his lectures, the lecturer is a true, good, loving, kind-hearted, generous man; his real “hoot” would sound as gently as the “roar” of any “sucking dove.” But at a lecture-table, the audience must be indulged in their own ways. The lecturer puts by his nature and puts on his art. He is acting the magician for the moment, and not himself, and thus his art excuses to him this patting on the back our mock philanthropy; *mock*, for it is out of nature, and not real. Honest genuine nature is indignant, and has an impulse as its instinct to punish villany. Who ever read history, and did not wish a Cæsar Borgia hanged? Philanthropists are very near being nuisances; they go out of the social course, which runs in circles—at first small ones too, home. There is room for the exercise of plenty of charity, amiableness, goodness; where is the need a man should burthen himself with the whole census? We live for the most part in circles, and if we do good, true, and serviceable duty within them, it little matters if some, with a pardonable eccentricity, deem them magic circles, and that all on the outside of the circumference are fiends ready to leap in open-mouthed to devour them. Professing philanthropists are apt to have too little thought of what is nearest, and to

stretch out beyond the natural reach of their arms. They are breakers into other people's circles, and perpetually guilty of a kind of affectionate burglary—and therefore not punishable, but to be pitied as a trifle insane. Poor Swift! how his friends wept at his last sad condition, which the hard hearts who knew him not, a century and a half after, choose to call Heaven's punishment, and his misery a “remorse.” How his true friends grieved for him! and such friends, too—men of generous natures that lift humanity out of that, its vexatious condition, which provokes universal satire. He had a circle of friends whom he dearly loved, and who as dearly loved him. No matter how many yahoos go to the whipping-post. Take care of the home circles, and ever keep the temper sweet in that temperate zone, which the natural course of society has provided for you; and be sure the world won't be a bit worse off, if you light your cigar at your own hearth, and pleasantly write a pretty sharp satire on the world at large. We know not if it is not a fair position to lay down, that all satirists are amiable men; our best have been eminently so. Poor gentle Cowper, in his loving frenzy, wielded the knout stoutly, and had it been in his religion, would have whipped himself like a pure Franciscan; and yet he loved his neighbor. And it is our belief that Swift was good and amiable, and as little like a yahoo as those who depict him as one. Nature gave him a biting power, and it was her instinct that made him use it; and what if he exaggerated? It is the poet's license. What did Juvenal? and what did he more than Juvenal? Oh, this at once bold and squeamish age!—bold to do bad things, and to cry out against having them bold or punished, but delighting in dressing up an imaginary monster and ticketing it with the name of Jonathan Swift, dead a century ago!!

And was there so little vice and villany in the world in Swift's time, or in Hogarth's time, that it should have been allowed to escape? Party was virulent and merciless, and divided men, so that statesmen had no time to care for good public morals. To be a defeated minister was to be sent to the Tower, as Swift's friend Harley was, and kept there two years. They were corrupt times—yahoo times. What says the sober historian, the narrator of facts, about 1717? There are accounts of the “Mug-houses,” when the Whig and Tory factions divided the nation. There was the attack on these Mug-houses, retaliations and riots, and there were “Mohocks,” of which we read too pleasantly now in the *Spectator*, who went about with drawn swords and kept the city in terror. It is somewhere about the year 1730 of which the historian speaks thus:—“A great remissness of government prevailed at this time in England. Peace both at home and abroad continued to be the great object of the minister. Prosperity in commerce introduced luxury—hence necessities were created, and these drove the lower classes of people into the most abandoned wickedness. Averse to all penal and sanguinary measures, the minister gave not that encouragement to the ordinary magistrates that would enable them to give

an effectual check to vice among the multitude. This produced a very pernicious effect among the higher class, so that almost universal degeneracy of manners prevailed. It was not safe to travel the roads or walk the streets; and often the civil officers themselves dared neither to repel the violences nor punish the crimes that were committed. A species of villains now started up, unknown to former times, who made it their business to write letters to men of substance, threatening to set fire to their houses in case they refused their demands, and sometimes their threats were carried into execution. In short, the peculiar depravity of the times became at length so alarming that the government was obliged to interpose, and a considerable reward was offered for discovering the ruffians concerned in such execrable practices.*

If Swift's miseries were so large as to make Archbishop King shed tears and pronounce him the most unhappy man on earth, on the subject of whose wretchedness no question may be asked; and if, remembering this, we reflect upon his great and active doings, it will not be without admiration that we shall see how manfully he strove against being overwhelmed with inevitable calamities; and if we think him too much inclined to view mankind ill, we should reflect that he lived in such times as we have been describing, and had ill-treatment enough from mankind to render his best struggles for contentment at times hard, and that he preserved his friendships to the last.

The fortuitous disappointments of life may be borne with a humble patience, the virtue in misery; the disappointments which our fellow creatures inflict by their falseness and wickedness, are apt in a degree to make generous natures misanthropic; but even then their best feelings do but retreat from their advanced posts—retire within, and cling with greater love and resolution to the home fortress, fortified and sustained by a little army of dear friends. So it was with Swift: out in the world he was the traveler Gulliver—but the best friendships made his world his home. Even in the strictest sense of *home*, such a home as Swift had, of so strange a home-love, we know not to what great degree we should look on that with pity. It is to be hoped not one of his revilers have had his miseries—which even his friend was with tears requested not to look into.

The animosities of Whigs and Tories were extreme. Swift declared himself a Whig in politics, a Tory as high-churchman. In the course of political experience it is evident one of the principles must give way. Swift saw to what the Whig policy tended: the higher interests prevailed with him—he joined the Tories. Giant as he was, we are not surprised at the strong expressions of the essayist whom we have before quoted, “under Harley, Swift reigned, Swift was the Government, Swift was Queen, Lords and Commons. There was tremendous work to do, and Swift did it all.” We do not mean to say Swift was not a thorough man of the world; nor that he did not look to his own interests, as men of the world do;

* Russell's History of England.

but at the same time it would be hard to show that he was profligate as to political principle. He may have changed his views, or political principles may have shifted themselves. We firmly believe him to have been honest. But he left the Whig ranks. Having done so, he was too great not to be feared, and so hated—and is it too much to say that this Whig hatred with regard to him has come down to our day, and unforgiving as it is, as it cannot persecute the man, persecutes his memory? It is next to impossible not to see that political rancor has directed and dipped into its own malignant gall the pen of Lord Jeffrey, who in that essay, which has now become cheap railway reading, heaps all possible abuse on Swift, ascribing to him all bad motives—is furiously wroth with him even now because he abandoned the Whigs. It is the very burthen of his vituperative essay. He (Swift) is a political apostate, and a libeller of the Whigs against his conscience; and this Lord Jeffrey gathers from his letters. Indeed! and was it in Lord Jeffrey's mind so dreadful an offense (if true) this writing against his conscience, and to be discovered in private letters, at supposed variance with published documents by this said Dean? We fear Lord Jeffrey was not aware that he was passing a very severe censure upon his own conduct when he wrote thus of Swift; for we remember reading a letter by the said Lord Jeffrey in entire contradiction to that which, as editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, he had given out to the world. In this private letter, published in his “Life,” he writes in perfect terror, and in the deepest despair of the nation, arising from the dangerous tendency of articles in that *Review*, with, as we conceive, a very poor apology, that he could not restrain his ardent writers. Party blinded him then, and thus he vents his rancor further, forgetful of the lampoons of the Whig Tom Moore, the *Twopenny Post-bag*, and a long list—and of the Whig Byron, and his doings in that line. “In all situations the Tories have been the greatest libellers, and, as is fitting, the great prosecutors of libels.” Lord Jeffrey, when he wrote this, was as forgetful of his own party as of himself in particular—of the many personalities in his own review, as of Whig writings. Unfortunately for them, they were not so gifted with wit as their opponents, but their malignity on that account was the greater. What is to be said of Lord Holland's note-book? But Lord Jeffrey was not the one to condemn, however others might be justified in doing so, even personal libels, which, in his own case, as editor and political Whig agent, he justifies, and, more than that, sets up a principle to maintain his justification. It would appear that one of his contributors had been shocked at the personal libels in the *Edinburgh*, and had remonstrated. Jeffrey thus defends the practice: “To come, for instance, to the attacks on the person of the sovereign. Many people, and I profess myself to be one, may think such a proceeding at variance with the dictates of good taste, of dangerous example, and repugnant to good feelings, and therefore will not themselves have recourse to it.” (Here his memory should have hinted—

"Qui facit per alium facit per se.")

"Yet," he continues, "it would be difficult to deny that it is, or may be, a lawful weapon to be employed in the great and eternal contest between the court and the country. Can there be any doubt that the personal influence and personal character of the sovereign is an element, and a pretty important element, in the practical constitution of the government, and always forms part of the strength or weakness of the administration he employs? In the abstract, therefore, I cannot think that attempts to weaken that influence, to abate a dangerous popularity, or even to excite odium toward a corrupt and servile ministry, by making the prince, on whose favor they depend, generally contemptible or hateful, are absolutely to be interdicted or protested against. Excesses no doubt may be committed. But the system of attacking abuses of power by attacking the person who instigates or carries them through by general popularity or personal influence, is lawful enough, I think, and may form a large scheme of *Whig opposition*—not the best or the noblest part, certainly, but one not without its use, and that may, on some occasions, be altogether indispensable."—

Letter to Francis Horner, Esq., 12th, March, 1815.

These semi-apologetic qualifying expressions "against good taste and feeling," only make one smile, as showing the clear sin against conscience, in thus falling into or recommending the large scheme of Whig opposition. One might imagine him to have been one of Mr. Puff's conspirators in his tragedy, who had manufactured from the play a particularly Whig party-prayer—a prayer to their god of battle, whoever he was—certainly one a mighty assistant in such conspiracies.

"Behold thy votaries submissive beg,
That thou wilt deign to grant them all they ask;
Assist them to accomplish all their ends,
And sanctify whatever means they use
To gain them."—*The Critic.*

Every one will now agree, of course, with Lord Jeffrey, that the Tories have ever been the great libellers!!!

Was it ever known that Tom Moore, or even the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, were prosecuted!!! We do not justify Swift in all his libels—some bad enough. They were strange times, and of no common license; and who was more licentiously attacked than Swift himself? And he knew how to retaliate, and he did it terribly and effectually. Many badly-written things were ascribed to Swift which he did not write. But we must not take the code of manners of one age, and a more refined age, and utterly condemn, by reference to them, the manners of another, as a chargeable offense against an individual. Much that Swift wrote could not be written now; much that was written by Mr. Thackeray's other "Humorists" could not be written now; and yet the objections are on the score of manners wanting in refinement, and not that morals were offended. In Swift's time, both in literature and politics, men wrote coarsely, and acted somewhat coarsely, too; for they wrote in disgust, which was scarcely lessened by a fear of the pillory. Retaliations were

severe. De Foe, who knew well what political prosecution was, wrote thus on Lord Haversham's speech: "But fate, that makes footballs of men, kicks some up-stairs and some down; some are advanced without honor, others suppressed without infamy; some are raised without merit, some are crushed without crime; and no man knows, by the beginning of things, whether his course shall issue in a peerage or a pillory"—in most witty and satiric allusion to Lord Haversham's and his own condition. Swift's *Account of the Court and Empire of Japan*, written in 1728, is no untrue representation of the factions and ministerial profligacy of that period. The Dean, as an Irish patriot—for he heartily took up the cause of Ireland—was persecuted, and a reward of £300 offered for the discovery of the author of one of the Drapier's Letters. The anecdote told on this occasion is very characteristic of Swift. He was too proud to live in fear of any man. His butler, whom alone he trusted, conveyed these letters to the printer. When the proclamation of reward came out, this servant strolled from the house and staid out all night and part of next day. It was feared he had betrayed his master. When he returned the Dean ordered him instantly to strip himself of his livery, and ordered him to leave the house; "For," says he, "I know my life is in your power, and I will not bear, out of fear, either your insolence or negligence." The man was, however, honest and humble, and even desired to be confined till the danger should be over. But his master turned him out. The sequel should be told. When the time of information had expired he received the butler again; and "soon afterward ordered him and the rest of the servants into his presence, without telling his intentions, and bade them take notice that their fellow servant was no longer Robert the butler, but that his integrity had made him Mr. Blakeney, Verger of St. Patrick's, whose income was between thirty and forty pounds a-year." As it has fallen in the way to give this narrative of his conduct to a deserving servant, it may not be amiss, in this place, to offer a pendant; and it may be given the more readily, as those who wish to view him as a misanthropic brute, and they who would commend him for his humanity, may make it their text for their praise or their abuse. "A poor old woman brought a petition to the deanery; the servant read the petition and turned her about her business. Swift saw it, and had the woman brought in, warmed and comforted with bread and wine, and dismissed the man for his inhumanity."

To revert, however, to his political course. When the Tory ministry was broken up, he never swerved from his friendships, nor did he court one probable future minister at the expense of the other. Indeed, at the beginning of the break-up, he clung the more closely to Harley the dismissed minister. But even this conduct has been misrepresented by those who viewed all his actions upside down, as a deep policy, that he might be sure of a friend at court which ever side might ultimately win.

That he might appear wanting in no possible im-

possible vice, avarice has been added to the number adduced. Even Johnson charges his economy upon his "love of a shilling." This does appear to us, after much examination of data, a very gratuitous accusation. His early habits were necessarily those of a poor man; he never was a rich one; and he was far above the meanness of enlarging his means at the expense of his deanery, its present interests, or of his successor, by any selfish regard to fines. Due economy is often taken to be avarice. Nor does it follow that reasonable parsimony, when constantly practiced for a worthy purpose, is avarice. Such avarice is at least not uncommon in great and good minds. Swift so often made it known that he had a good object, and which he fulfilled, that it seems quite malicious to forget his motives, and to ascribe his by no means large accumulations to a miserly disposition. He did not in fact, after all, leave a very ample endowment for his hospital for the insane. The first £500 which he could call his own he devoted to loans, in small sums, to poor yet industrious men. Had he been avaricious, he might have accumulated a fortune by his writings. A very small sum (we believe for his *Gulliver*) was the only payment received for all his writings. Had he been naturally avaricious, he would not have returned, with marked displeasure, a donation sent him by Harley. There was a sturdy manliness in his pride which forbade him to incur serious debt; and this pride caused him to measure nicely, or rather say frugally, his expenditure. He had, indeed, a "love of a shilling," as he ought to have had, for he knew for what purpose he husbanded it. We know an instance of seeming parsimony that originated in, and was itself, an admirable virtue. It was in rather humble life. The man had given up his little patrimony—his all—to the maintenance of two sisters whom he truly loved; and when he went out into the world, trusting to his industry alone, he made a vow to himself that the half of every shilling he could save should go to his sisters. This man drove hard bargains; by habit he came to think that what he spent idly was a half robbery. Many a hard name, doubtless, was cast at this tender-hearted man in his progress through little-knowing and ill-judging society.

We do not attempt a delineation of Swift's character. We are conscious that it was too great for our pen. It must be a deep philosophy that is able to search into such a mind, and bring all the seeming contradictions into order, and sift his best qualities from their mixtures of eccentricities, from a real or imaginary insanity. This part of the subject has been ably treated, and with medical discrimination, by Mr. Wilde in his *Closing Years of Dean Swift's Life*, from whose work we gladly quote some just animadversions upon his vituperators.

"To the slights thrown upon his memory by the Jeffreys, Broughams, Macaulays, De Quinceys, and other modern *literati*, answers and refutations have been already given. Of these attacks, which exhibit all the bitterness of contemporary and personal enmity, it is only necessary to request a careful analysis, when they will be found to be gross exaggera-

tions of some trivial circumstances, but written in all the unbecoming spirit of partisanship; while the opinions of his contemporaries, Harley, Bolingbroke, Pope, Arbuthnot, Delany, etc., are a sufficient guarantee for the opinion which was entertained of Swift by those who knew him best and longest."

It was well said, with reference to Jeffrey's article in the *Edinburgh Review*, "But Swift is dead, as Jeffrey well knew when he reviewed his works." If men of mark will be so unjust, unscrupulous, uncharitable, as to apply "base perfidy" to such a man as Swift, no wonder if the small fry of revilers, whose lower minds could never by any possibility rise to the conception of such a character as Swift, should lift their shrieking voices to the same notes, as if they would claim a vain consequence by seeming to belong to the pack. Mr. Howitt odiously alludes to the discarded story which we have noticed, the slander at Kilroot, and grounds upon it a charge of "dissipated habits" in his youth. This writer, lacking the ability and influence of the superior libelers, as is common with such men, yelps his shrill vulgarities the louder in such expressions as "selfish tyranny," "wretched shuffler," "contemptible fellow."

It is a vile thing this vice of modern times—this love of pulling down the names of great men of a past age—of blotting and slurring over every decent epitaph written in men's hearts about them. That men of note themselves should fall into it, is but a sad proof that rivalry and partisanship in politics make the judgment unjust. We remember the reproof Canning gave to Sir Samuel Romilly, no common man, who indeed acknowledged Mr. Pitt's talents, but denied that he was a great man. "Heroic times are these we live in," said Canning, "with men at our elbow of such gigantic qualities as to render those of Pitt ordinary in the comparison. Ah! who is there living, in this house or out of it, who, taking measure of his own mind or that of his coevals, can be justified in pronouncing that William Pitt was not a great man?" Of all our modern revilers of Swift, the pullers to pieces of his fame and character, is there any that might not shrink from putting his own measure of either to the comparison? Political hatred lasts too long—it reverses the law of canonization: if there is to be worship, it must be immediate. A century destroys it; but enmity survives.

"Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him,
But little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on," etc.

We commenced with the intention of reviewing Mr. Thackeray's Lectures, but have stopped short at his life of Swift, and yet feel that we have but touched upon the subject matter relating to that great man; and hope to refer to it, with some notice and extracts from his works, at a future time.

And what is Swift? What is any dead man that we should defend his name, which is nothing but a name—and not that to *him*? What is Swift to us, more than "Hecuba" to the poor player, or "he to Hecuba," that we should rise with indignation to plead his cause? Praise or blame to the man dead a

century and more, is nothing for him, no, nor to any one of his race (for affections of that kind are lost in a wide distribution.) Shakspeare makes even honor of a shorter date. "What is honor to him who died o' Wednesday?" Very soon individual man melts away from his individuality, and merges into the general character; he becomes quite an undistinguishable part of the whole generation; his appearance unknown. Could the great and the small visit us from the dead—they who "rode on white asses," and they who were gibbeted—they whom the "king delighted to honor," and they whom the hangman handled—there is no "usher of black rod" that could call them out by their names. Their individualities are gone—their names must go in search of them in vain—they will fasten nowhere with certainty—none know which is which. Let Cæsar come with his murderers, and who shall tell which is Cæsar? After a generation, there is no one on earth to grieve for the guilty or unfortunate, unless in a fiction or tale. We laugh at the weeping lady who puts her tears to the account of the "anniversary of the death of poor dear Queen Elizabeth." Feelings and affections of past ages are all gone, and become but a cold history, that the poet or the romance-writer may warm again in their sport. They no longer belong to those who had them. While memory and affection lasts there is a kind of vitality, but it soon goes. "Non omnis moriar" is a motto to be translated elsewhere. The atmosphere of fame, for this earth, rises, like that we breathe, but a little way above it, and is ever shifting.

But if the individual thus melts away, not so the general character; that will remain—and in that the living are concerned. We deem it a part of a true philanthropy if we can pull out one name from the pit of defamation into which it has been unhand-somely thrust, and can place it upon the record of our general nature, that our common humanity may be raised, and, as much as may be, glorified thereby. Such has been our motive, (for with this motive alone is Swift any thing to us,) and we hope we have succeeded in rescuing one of nature's great men from unmerited obloquy.

We have spoken freely of Mr. Thackeray's Lectures, with reference to his character of Swift.

We believe that he has unfortunately followed a lead; and, in so doing, has been encouraged to a bias by his natural gift—satire. We say not this to his dispraise. Like other natural gifts, the satiric puts out ever its polyp feelers, and appropriates whatever comes within its reach, and promises nutriment. It is not indeed likely, in this our world, to be starved for lack of sustenance; nor would society be the better if it were. But we do doubt if it be quite the talent required in a biographer. We would not have Mr. Thackeray abate one atom of the severity of his wit; and we believe him to have an abhorrence of every thing vicious, mean, and degrading, and that his purpose in all his writings is to make vice odious. He habitually hunts that prey; having seen the hollowness of professions, he drives his merciless pen through it, and sticks the culprit upon its point, and

draws him out upon the clean sheet, and blackens him, and laughs at the figure he has made of him. A writer of such a stamp ought to be considered, what he really is, a moralist—therefore a benefactor in our social system.

But with this power, let him touch the living vices till they shrink away cowed. The portraiture of the vices of men who lived a century or more ago, real or imaginary, may only serve to feed the too flagrant vice of the living—self-congratulating vanity. If then he must write, or lecture, on biography, we would earnestly recommend him to do it with a fear of himself. His other works have contributed many hours of delight to the days of most of us; and in the little volume before us, setting aside his lecture on Swift, there is much to amuse and to instruct. The sharp contrasting choice of his positions, and easy natural manner, not forcing but enticing the reader to reflection, must ever make Mr. Thackeray a popular writer. Were he less sure of the public ear, and the public voice in his favor, we should not have endeavored to rescue the character of Swift from his grasp; and we believe him to be of that generous nature to rejoice, if we have, as we hope, been successful in the attempt. We cannot speak too highly of Mr. Thackeray as one most accomplished in his art: his style, eminently English, is unmistakably plain and energetic. It is original—so curt, yet so strong; there is never amplification without a purpose, nor without the charm of a new image. Thoughts are clad in the words that best suit them. With him, pauses speak; and often a full stop, unexpected in a passage, is eloquent. You think that he has not said all, because he has said so little: yet that little is all; and there is left suggestion for feelings which words would destroy. He is never redundant. So perfect is this his art that his very restraint seems an *abandon*. He knows when and how to gain the credit of forbearance, where in fact there is none. In his mastery over this his peculiar manner, he brings it to bear upon the pathetic or the ridiculous with equal effect; and, like a consummate satirist, makes even the tragic more tragic, more ghastly, by a slight connection with the light, the ridiculous, a certain air of indifference. We instance the passage of the death of Rawdon, in his *Vanity Fair*. Few are the words, but there is a history in them. The apparent carelessness in dismissing his hero reminds one of that in Richard the Third.

"The Lady Anne hath bade the world good-night."

His strongest ridicule is made doubly ridiculous by the gravity he tacks to it. It sticks like a burr upon the habit of his unfortunate victim. He puts the rags of low motives upon seeming respectability, and makes presumption look beggarly—effecting that which the Latin satirist says real poverty does—*ridiculos homines facit*. Most severe in his indifference, his light playfulness is fearfully Dantesque; it is ever onward, as if sure of its catastrophe. We do not know any author who can say so much in few common words. These are characteristics of genius. It has often been said, and perhaps with truth, that the reader shuts the book uncomfortable,

not very much in love with human nature: we are by no means sure that this is absolutely wrong; such is the feeling on looking at Hogarth's pictures. It was the author's intention, in both cases, to be a moral satirist, not a romance-writer. It has been objected that he allows the vicious too much success; but he may plead that so it is in life: even the Psalmist expressed his surprise at the prosperity of the wicked. There is truth to the life in this treatment; a certain seeming success tells not the whole. It is a more serious charge that he has made virtue and goodness insipid. We wish he could persuade himself that there is romance in real life, and that it is full of energies; its true portraiture would give a grace to his works. Cervantes and Le

Sage were not all satire; their beautiful touches of romance hurt not the general character of their works; the fantastic frame-lines mar not the pathos of the picture. With this recommendation we close our article, with trust in the good sense and good feeling of Mr. Thackeray, rejoiced to think that his powerful genius is in action: whatever vein he may be in, he will be sure to instruct and amuse, and accumulate fame to himself. If the virtues do not look their very best, when he ushers them into company, at least vice will never have to boast of gentle treatment—he will make it look as it deserves; and if he does not always thrust it out of doors in rags and penury, he will set upon it, and leave its further punishment for conjecture.